



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH
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November 14, 2001

TO: Washington State Board of Health Members
FROM: Craig McLaughlin, Policy Manager
RE: EMERGENCY RESPONSE CAPACITY REPORT

Background and Summary

On October 9 and 10, 2001, the Washington State Board of Health heard briefings from national experts, state and local public health officials, and hospital personnel about state and local capacity for responding to a health event such as a bioterrorism attack. The Board also reviewed briefing materials assembled by staff and heard informally from dozens of attendees at the October 8–10 Washington State Joint Conference on Health.

It was the sense of the Board members after hearing testimony that the global, national, state, and local public health and health care infrastructure is underprepared to respond to a major health disaster such as a bioterrorism attack. Furthermore, current threats to public health add a heightened sense of immediacy and urgency to our efforts to strengthen the public health infrastructure.

At the end of the meeting, members spoke to the need for broadened and deepened leadership on several issues related to public health's role in emergency preparedness and suggested that the Board might be in a unique position to augment existing leadership efforts. Board members agreed they would continue the discussion. Chair Linda Lake directed staff to develop a work product that would provide a focus for the Board's continued work. She instructed staff to make the work product as clearly reflective of the Board's sense of urgency and concern as possible, inviting Board members to temper the work product as they might find necessary.

Staff members have continued to consult with Board members in the intervening weeks and the attached draft report represents staff's best efforts to reflect the comments of the Board and to comply with the directions from the chair.

Recommended Board Motions

The Board may wish to consider, amend and approve the following motion:

The Board adopts the draft report {as amended}, "Response Capacity During A Health Emergency—A Review of Selected Issues" as submitted on November 14, 2001.